



Meeting Minutes

Date: March 26, 2023	Start Time: 3:33pm	Stop Time: 4:40pm																		
Note Taker: Terri Argent, REHS	Facilitator: Mayor Jamie Slutz																			
<table border="0"> <tr> <td>Attendees:</td> <td></td> <td>Guests:</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Dr. Sonia Ullum</td> <td>Mayor Jamie Slutz</td> <td>Bethany Perkowski</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cathy Heitger</td> <td>Terri Argent</td> <td>Audrey Sylvester</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Margaret Elum</td> <td>Dr. Lata Wiggins</td> <td>Anita Combs</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mike Reed</td> <td></td> <td>Erin Wise</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td>Heather Houston</td> </tr> </table>			Attendees:		Guests:	Dr. Sonia Ullum	Mayor Jamie Slutz	Bethany Perkowski	Cathy Heitger	Terri Argent	Audrey Sylvester	Margaret Elum	Dr. Lata Wiggins	Anita Combs	Mike Reed		Erin Wise			Heather Houston
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Mike Reed		Erin Wise																		
		Heather Houston																		
Minutes																				
On a motion by Sonia Ullum, seconded by Margaret Elum. Approval was given to approve February 2024 meeting minutes as emailed. Motion carried.																				
On a motion by Cathy Heitger, seconded by Sonia Ullum. Approval was given to pay the February bills for the Health Department in the amount of \$13,060.01, and for the WIC Department for \$12691.95. For a total amount of \$25,751.96 for February 2024 bills. Motion carried.																				
The monthly Vital Statistics, Environmental, and Nursing Division reports for February 2024 were accepted and approved without comment.																				
MINUTES																				
THIS MEETING IS BEING RECORDED																				
<u>Old Business</u>																				
1. (None)																				
<u>New Business</u>																				
1. Strategic Planning and Division Director presentation																				
a)																				
2. Approval to call Executive Session for an employee issue																				
a) Cathy Heitger moves to come out of Executive Session. Sonia Ullum seconds the motion.																				

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b) For approval- Mike Reed “aye” Ann Palaski “aye” Cathy Heitger “aye”
Sonia Ullum “aye”

3. Approval of proposal to develop a new Strategic Plan with Markwood Partners, LLC

a) Markwood Partners, LLC, their specialty is doing Strategic Plans for Health Departments. They’ve done it for a lot of other health departments in Ohio so they are very experienced. We have had 2 meetings with him and are very impressed with their service. This company develops strategic plans for health departments. Strategic plans are required for reaccreditation. As you know we are already accredited. We are a nationally accredited health department. The staff wrote our first strategic plan ourselves. But a much more professional, in depth plan is required for reaccreditation. Their fee is \$15,000. That can be paid from the annual stipend that we receive from ODH for accreditation. So it’d be going from ODH for accreditation and go right back into accreditation requirements.

b) Ann Palaski asks “there’s nothing else you can use the ODH money for, or it can only be used for accreditation?” Terri replies “that part of it. Yes. “ Ann asks if other Health Departments around here use them and Terri replies “yes. I don’t have the list on me but I believe they have worked with 12-20 Health Departments in the Northeast Ohio area they’ve done strategic plans for.”

c) Ann Palaski asks “where are they located, Markwood Partners?” Cathy Heitger replies “Uniontown.”

Motion made by Sonia Ullum to approve for developing a Strategic Plan with Markwood Partners, LLC. Seconded by Ann Palaski. All in favor Mike Reed “aye” Ann Palaski “aye.”

d) Cathy Heitger states “I wish I knew more about it.” Ann Palaski asks “what other cities use them? Can you think of one off the top of your head?” Terri replies “Not sure. I believe Ghent was on there. I can’t think of who else. Strategic plan is basically where you are now and where you are going in the future. If you’ve never done strategic plans before it can pretty in-depth. I think we were really lucky to pass with our first one, with the fact we did it ourselves.

e) Ann Palaski says “I am in favor of it because we have funding from ODH, so it’s not coming out of our budget.” Cathy asks if there was something else we needed the \$15,000 for. Terri responds “not so much on accreditation. Because that’s going to be our big thing this year. Each year for the five years we are accredited we focus on a different issue. Last year it was quality improvement. This year will be our Strategic Plan. The whole staff will work on that, but they’ll be the ones really bringing it together with graphs, etc.

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f) Cathy Heitger “aye”

4. Approval of additional funding to continue our HIV testing

a) We received an additional \$3,695.00 from Canton Public Health to continue our HIV testing program. They’re very pleased with the work we have done so far our first year and they are continuing that money.

Cathy Heitger makes a motion to accept funds for HIV testing. Seconded by Sonia Ullum. For approval Mike Reed “aye” Ann Palaski “aye” Cathy Heitger “aye” Sonia Ullum “aye”

5. Approval to renew our annual Association of Ohio Health Commissioners membership

a) This membership is an annual renewal, it is \$1,197.75. This provides discounts on 2 annual conferences. 2 for me and 1 for Dr. Wiggins. They will give us a discount on the conference itself, they pay gas if you drive down, and hotel discounts. We get our hotels for about half price. Last year they paid for one of our rooms for each night. So it almost pays for itself.

Motion by Ann Palaski to renew the annual Association of Ohio Health Commissioners membership. Seconded by Sonia Ullum. For approval Mike Reed “aye” Ann Palaski “aye” Cathy Heitger “aye” Sonia Ullum “aye”

6. Approval to create a Health Department website

a) We would like to develop a Health Department website separate from the City’s website. This would be a tool for reaccreditation to show website improvement and development and ease of access to health department information. We would contract with Labelle creative, who the city uses already for their website. I think Parks has their own website and most health departments have their own websites also. It would allow us to put more public health info out there. It costs \$9,760 to set it up. Then it is \$2100.00 annually for updates and maintenance.

b) Ann Palaski asks who manages the social media accounts for the Health Department. Terri responds “Bethany does our Facebook and Anita does our website” Ann asks if that includes Instagram. Terri says we currently only have Facebook but are looking into other platforms. Mayor Slutz confirms Anita has current access of the City’s webpage now.

c) Mayor Slutz asks the question “If she has access to that, do you think it would be smart to spend \$11,000.00 plus for your own website, when you have access to the City’s website?” Terri responds “I do. Only because I think it

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would be easier to find when you type in Massillon Health Department, it goes to the city's website. There's a few more click then to get to ours. The reaccreditation people like ease of information, how can we get to it easier. I think this would make it easier.

- d) Sonia Ullum moves to approve motion for the website as it's nice to click on quick links to get to people. Get you directly where you need to go. Ann asks "if we have the website already, is there a way to take what we have and just do some changes to it so that it is a standalone website?" Cathy asks who would be in charge of entering information on the new site. Terri responds "Anita."
- e) Cathy states "I won't mince words. I really am against spending close to \$12,000.00. It is all perceived value to me. There are so many companies out there that are willing to do it for you for free and not charge you the annual administrative costs. Not just my business but a couple of non-profits I'm involved with have been able to go and do the same thing. Got it made for free with no annual costs. So I think that is very expensive."
- f) Ann says "there is a Massillonohio.gov. with updated stuff on here. It is not out of date at all. So someone is doing this now. If I had that kind of money I would invest in an Instagram account. I feel like websites are an older generation's tool. There's telephone, then AOL, then webpages. I feel like we're moving more towards phones. More like we should be looking at apps or something more for the younger people. I feel like the website is something in between. The older/ elderly are going to want a phone number to call. The younger people will want an app on their phone. There's a void in between. I don't know if it's worth the money."
- g) Without a second motion, this item has not passed.

7. Approval to renew a membership in the Ohio Public Health Association

- a) Terri states "This is for our Nursing director, Audrey, to renew her annual membership for \$75.00 in the Ohio Public Health Association... a lot of information, nursing issues. It's really an important one."

Motion by Ann Palaski to renew membership with OPHA. Seconded by Sonia Ullum. Motion passed. For approval Mike Reed "aye" Ann Palaski "aye" Cathy Heitger "aye" Sonia Ullum "aye"

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8. Approval to accept a Public Entities Safety Grant

- a) Terri states “we got a PEP grant. We got approved to receive \$529.00of grant to replace our old AED defibrillator batteries. We received that PEP grant at the end of last year, so we did buy the batteries. So we need approval to receive the \$529.00.”

Motion by Cathy Heitger to receive the PEP grant. Seconded by Sonia Ullum. Motion passed. For passage Mike Reed “aye” Ann Palaski “aye” Cathy Heitger “aye” Sonia Ullum “aye”

9. Approval to attend the annual Ohio Environmental Midwest Workshop

- a) Terri states “this is for our 2 Environmental Health staff members who would like to attend the Ohio Environmental Midwest Workshop. They are excellent on updates and education. CEU’s will be offered for that. It will be in Columbus on March 11th& 12th. Cost will be \$120.00 for both conferences plus mileage and food. Because they have families they chose to not stay at a hotel, they’d rather drive.
- b) Mayor Slutz asks “what were the dates on that” Terri responds “March 11th & 12th in Columbus.”

Motion by Ann Palaski for approval of staff members attending the Ohio Environmental Midwest Workshop. Seconded by Sonia Ullum. Motion passed.

- Cathy Heitger asks “can I ask who those two staff people are? Terri responds “Bethany Perkowski is our Environmental Health Director and Heather Houston is our Environmental Health Sanitarion.” Cathy responds “got it.”
- Mayor Slutz asks “how much do they get for mileage? Do you know?” Terri responds “I think it went up to .57 this year.”

Mike Reed “aye” Ann Palaski “aye” Cathy Heitger “aye” Sonia Ullum “aye”

10. Approval to pay annual fees to maintain national accreditation

- a) Terri states “everyone knows what this is for pretty much. Every year that we do get accredited it costs us \$5600.00 and that is basically to maintain accreditation. Our accreditation is good for 5 years and we were accredited in 2020.
- b) Ann says “I feel like it was last year.” Terri says “no, I’m sorry. It was March of 2021. Ann says “I still feel like it was 2023. Feels like yesterday.”

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- c) Ann Asks “I have a question, that \$15,000 for the strategic plan. We couldn’t use that money for this could we? This a separate thing? Terri responds “this is separate. This we have to do.”

Motion made by Sonia Ullum to pay annual fees to maintain national accreditation. Seconded by Ann Palaski. Motion carried. For approval Mike Reed “aye” Ann Palaski “aye” Cathy Heitger “aye” Sonia Ullum “aye”

11. Public speaks

- a) Terri states “I’m going to see if our employee wants to speak. I’ll be right back. Excuse me”

Bethany Perkowski- “is this my, my time?”

Terri- “yeah. Please come on in.”

Bethany- “Ok. Is this being recorded?”

Terri- “yes.”

Bethany- “isn’t that supposed to be in executive session?”

Terri- “no not when umm not for public speaks. That’s when you’re speaking.”

Bethany- “I thought I was speaking on a disciplinary matter.”

Terri- “yes”

Bethan- “that’s what I asked for.”

Terri- “right. And I checked with the law department and they said you have to do it during public speaks.”

Bethany- “ok”

(closes doors)

Terri- “This is Bethany Perkowski, our Environmental Health Director.”

Bethany- “On December 11, 2023, on or about 1:44pm some power was lost in the Environmental Health division. The lights all stayed on and it was immediately identified that my space heater shut off and Heathers computer flickered. I asked Heather to text the City electricians, and she did so at 1:44pm. At 1:44pm the electricians responded that they were on their way. The electricians arrived at 2:07pm. Shortly after the text with the electricians, Christine shouted back to the Environmental Health division asking if we lost power. I stated that we did lose some, and the city electricians were coming. At this time I had not left my office since before the electrical issue, and Heather only went from her office to mine. After that, Terri inquired about the electrical issue. We told her what we knew, what we did, and Terri did not say anything about my mishandling the situation. Before the electricians could arrive, Audrey came back and flipped a breaker. When the electricians arrived at 2:07pm Audrey informed them that she had flipped the breaker and she stated that she wanted her nursing freezer on its own circuit. The electricians concluded that there were currently too many things on that one circuit and it was just too much. Terri was texted updates from me at 2:22pm, 2:23pm, and at 2:25pm I asked Terri to come back as she had not responded. Terri

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came back to my office and upon hearing the update on how the computers, copier and heater and whatever is in the nursing room combined to overload the circuit. Terri stated that it is known that the building has electrical issues and a large and expensive update will be planned for the next budget cycle. None of this information was ever shared with Heather or I prior to December 11th and we were not aware of any known electrical issues. That being said, one would think that is critical information that should be shared with the entire staff or certainly with the division directors to ensure that if anything does happen with the electric, people know it may be more serious than it appears. On or about 9:45 during the staff in-service on December 13th, 2023 Audrey informed everyone that she needs to be made aware of any power issue from the kitchen to the back. She continued to say that this is because protocol was not followed on December 11th with the electrical issue, and the vaccine was nearly lost as the freezer allegedly rose four degrees in the less than 30 minutes that the freezer was shut, shut off. And if we'd have lost the vaccine due to a rise in temperature that she and Dr. Wiggin's would lose their licenses. Shortly thereafter, upon the conclusion of the In-service I asked Terri if she could come back to Environmental Health for a division meeting with her, Heather and I. Due to the discussion surrounding the electrical issue I thought it would be best to explain to Terri what occurred on December 11th. Heather, Terri and I had a closed door meeting in my office. Terri had apparently already been in talks with other employees as she already had her mind made up that I was completely responsible and did not follow the nursing protocol. When I asked for a copy of said protocol Terri admitted that there was not actually a written protocol. She did not have an answer when asked how I was to know a protocol that I was never informed of and was never provided with a written copy of. Terri then indicated that I should have contacted her before contacting the electricians, as she should always be the first to know. This however is very confusing because just prior to this when she was off, the electricians handled a rodent issue involving multiple mice that were observed, one in the hallway and one in my office, which she appreciated. And now she is saying that it is not acceptable to call anyone before her. In addition when I said that a freezer rising 4 degrees in less than 30 minutes didn't sound right, Terri only stated that the freezer was very old and wasn't the best. I continued to explain to Terri that it was only thought that my office and possibly something in Heathers office was not working. Terri was told that it was not known by Heather and I until the electricians told us what was on the same circuit as half of my office. Again, nobody ever informed me that anything in Environmental Health was tied in with anything in nursing. In addition, Environmental Health was never told that the vaccine freezer did not have an alarm system like the vaccine refrigerator does and as we often hear the alarm talking we assume that all of their vaccine was held with an alarm warning. Terri was specifically told that there was no malice intended, rather environmental health was never given any sort of vaccine protocol or information about the electrical system. Terri did not agree with this and she said she should've been called first. I apologized for not calling her first, took responsibility for that, and again reminded her that I did not realize it involved nursing in any way. Terri proceeded to talk about how

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nobody in the office got along and she wanted things how they used to be. I stated that ever since I reported the hostile work environment on 9/22/2023, I'm treated differently by the staff and Terri said she doesn't see that. Terri then stated that I needed to come out of my office more to socialize as I only come out when I have work business. She said that she wants everyone to be friends and she wants me to be her friend. While I understand the importance of office relationships, and this is obviously very important to Terri as on our last staff survey it even referenced having a best friend in the office. My number one priority is protecting public health. With that I politely stated to Terri that I just do not have time to socialize, but I can easily work with anyone in a professional capacity. This was not well received and Terri said that she doesn't know how to change anything in the office, she doesn't know how to fix it and nothing will change until someone leaves. This comment from her did not sit well with me and after she wrote me up I have been thinking if it is I that she would like to leave. If Terri looked at the monthly and annual numbers of Environmental Health inspections, plan reviews, consultations, complaints, education provided to operators, the huge number of hours of clerical work that Heather and I do, the hours of additional mandatory meetings and accreditation trainings she should understand I just don't have time to sit in peoples offices and socialize like the others do. To do my job at the level that I do, it takes more time than I have in a day. But I take a lot of pride in what I do for the city of Massillon and I think that is evident. Regarding the actual document that was given to me on 12/14/2023 stating that I was receiving an official write up, I actually had a scheduled vacation day on 12/14 however I opted to come in that morning, clock in and complete the necessary work I had before leaving for the day. Due to the In-service we had just had and the additional training that was announced on 12/13, an unexpected discovery of 3 unlicensed RFE's at Sterilite, a violation of a dog bite quarantine, body art licensing and a smoking complaint investigation on 12/13 that needed information and needed to be put into the states database. This work needed to be completed and it was all time sensitive. On 12/14/2023 I clocked in before 8:00am and I did not get out of the office until at or about 9:30am. At or around 8:15 Terri came back to my office, looked very surprised to see me, asked me if I was working. To which I said I was but just for a little while longer and she proceeded to tell me that she had verbal warning for me due to the electrical issue. She felt that I was at fault and she handed me a copy of the write-up, while holding onto the original. I stated that I did not agree with that and I asked her how I was to dispute it. She said that would be to the Board of Health and that would be at the January meeting unless I needed it sooner. Further she said I was to submit a formal request to her, to which I stated that I would. That was the extent of the conversation. My issues with the 12/14 meeting are first- she came into my office with the write-up, did not even close the door, and proceeded to have a rather brief conversation standing beside my desk that she continued to have even when Heather walked in from outside. I felt that it was very disrespectful of her to have such a conversation with my office door open and my subordinate in the room. At no point was I asked to sign the write-up. So is it even valid since I wasn't given the opportunity to sign it? It is indicated on the write-up that the chain of

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command was not followed. But there is no policy regarding how to handle such a situation. In the past Terri has always stated that she appreciated when we can handle our own problems, provided financial decisions don't need to be made and she used to say that she didn't want to micromanage us. It states on the write-up that the incident was discussed and the Health Commissioner would be notified should this occur in the future. This matter was not discussed in any way on 12/14/2023 and I would've liked the opportunity to discuss this with the write-up in front of me and have that officially documented. In addition, the conversation on December 13th never mentioned she was planning a write-up and I believe that is something she should've stated prior to our conversation. Last, I do not understand the reason for discipline being classified as housekeeping but I was not given the opportunity to ask. I believe that this write-up was done in retaliation for reporting the hostile work environment and I do not believe that Terri handled that appropriately or performed a proper investigation. This has led to ongoing hostility in the office. I respectfully ask the Board to reconsider this write-up. I am requesting that this discipline be removed from my file because I believe this is unfair disciplinary action because there was no policy at the time of the incident, the Health Commissioner has nothing to site that I violated. In addition Terri has stated that disciplinary actions remain in your record indefinitely and can be used in progressive discipline years down the road. I committed no act of malfeasance, I respectfully took responsibility for my actions, and at the Health Commissioners request she is being contacted with any issues so she can personally handle things. I am more than willing to follow any department procedure but I need to be informed of procedures in advance. I have always done my job with integrity. I'm proud to serve the residents of Massillon and my last two surveys in 2023 with the State of Ohio as well as every survey I've had with the Ohio Department of Health and Ohio Department of Agriculture since my hiring show that I'm doing my job and I'm doing it well. Thank you for your time and consideration. Can I answer any questions? Or you're always welcome to come see me."

- b) Ann Palaski states "I just want to say thank you for all the time and effort you put into the city of Massillon. I can tell you do your job well. That's a very well thought and well-planned letter. It must've taken you a lot of time to collect all that into, put it all together and I can tell that it is very emotional and I am sorry that you are going through this kind of a situation." Bethany responds "thank you."
- c) Terri states "thank you Bethany" Bethany responds "thank you for your time. I appreciate it."

12. Approval to call Executive Session

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- a) Ann Palaski moves for call into Executive Session. Cathy Heitger seconds the motion.
- b) Sonia Ullum moves to come out of Executive Session. Cathy Heitger seconds the motion.

ADJOURNEMENT

Meeting adjourned at 4:40pm. Motion by Ann Palaski, seconded by Sonia Ullum. Motion carried.

APPROVAL

These minutes represent a true and accurate record of this meeting to be the best of my knowledge.

Meeting minutes submitted by:

Date:

Mayor Jamie Slutz
President of the Board

Terri D. Argent, Health Commissioner
Secretary of the Board